

News Release



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Excellent Photo Opportunity

Hidden Treasures to be Uncrated for Reopening of Will Rogers Ranch House

Prized Western Art Returning to Restored Rooms

SACRAMENTO – Museum curators are beginning the task of prying open wooden crates to recreate a step back in time to the 1930s when the world famous actor and humorist Will Rogers relaxed in the family room of his Santa Monica ranch house.

It has been three years since his rare Charles Russell bronze sculptures, paintings and other treasures have seen daylight. They have been hidden away in storage for the ranch house restoration and stabilization. With four rooms complete, California State Parks is eager to invite the public to return and experience a slice of history.

“We are delighted to be able to say ‘Welcome back to the ranch’ and its surroundings,” said California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman. “We invite everyone to experience this remarkable legacy of a man whose words and wisdom remain part of the American culture 70 years after his untimely death.”

The public is invited to the reopening on March 25 at 10 a.m. where they will witness a reenactment of the 1944 ceremony in which the Roger’s Family handed over the deed to the estate to the people of California. The free event will include a formal rededication ceremony with California officials, Rogers family members, representatives of the Will Rogers Memorial Museums, entertainment personalities, a trick roper, an impersonator and the Will Rogers Cooperative Association. It will also include tours of the home, self-guided tours of the grounds, and a cornerstone laying ceremony by the Masons at Jimmy’s Barn.

Rogers ambled onto the American stage early in the Twentieth Century from his humble beginnings in the Oklahoma Territory, where he learned to rope and ride and later added his unique “take” on current events that launched him into success as a member of western shows. From there he moved to the Ziegfeld Follies and vaudeville and eventually arrived in Hollywood where he was the number one movie box-office draw by 1934.

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California State Parks on the internet: <http://www.parks.ca.gov>



The house was purchased in the 1920's by Rogers and his wife, Betty, initially as a weekend home. Following a fire at the couple's Beverly Hills mansion, the ranch house became the family's full-time residence and grew from a small cottage to a 31-room structure set in a canyon just off Sunset Boulevard.

The \$5 million restoration of the grounds and home was funded by California State Parks from their share of voter approved bond funds, Proposition 12 (2000) and Proposition 40 (2002). The restoration includes earthquake retrofitting of the home and the installation of a climate control air conditioning system, which required the removal of all wood flooring, numbering each plank and replacing it. Photos are available upon request.

"The goal has been to accomplish the required renovation while being extremely careful to preserve the home as it was in Will Rogers' life," said Curator Rochelle Nicholas-Boothe.

The park is located in Pacific Palisades approximately four-and-a-half miles east of Pacific Coast Highway off Sunset Boulevard. The 300-acre facility attracts more than 200,000 visitors a year with its visitor's center, guided tours of the grounds, picnic areas, hiking trails, pony camp clinics and the polo matches held on the grounds.

This is an excellent photo opportunity and reporters wishing to view the process of uncrating and replacing the prized western art may contact any of the following:

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